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worthy of such a blessing. We think the cause of religious freedom among the Irish in America owes much to the exertions of *The Irish Evangelist*, which we have been reading for upwards of twelve months, and it would give us sincere pleasure to hear that some of our wealthier readers in England or Ireland would assist the good work in which it is engaged, by sending some pecuniary assistance to the editor and proprietor, Mr. John Hurley, No. 265, Bowery, New York, to enable him to distribute his paper gratuitously to our countrymen in America who are anxious to read and think for themselves. We agree with Mr. Hurley, that it requires very different reading from the ordinary tract to meet the wants of inquiring Roman Catholics; and while he conducts his journal in the spirit of candid inquiry and fair reasoning, he may feel secure of our cordial sympathy and co-operation.*

Correspondence.

INFALLIBILITY OF THE CHURCH OF ROME.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE CATHOLIC LAYMAN.

SIR—The following thoughts suggested themselves to the writer on reading Mr. Rourke's letter, in your last number.

Mr. Rourke "discovers the infallibility of the Church in the positive and unequivocal promises of our Lord Jesus Christ;" but Mr. Rourke overlooks the fact, repeatedly proved in Scripture, that God's promises are *contingent*, and require that man shall faithfully and honestly endeavour to fulfil his part, no other infallible guides than God's Word and God's Spirit being anywhere revealed. Take, for instance, the call of Moses and Aaron—"I will be with thy mouth and with his mouth, and will teach you what ye shall do."—Exod. iv. 15. Immediately after this Moses and Aaron assembled the people, informed them of the commission they had received, and "*did signs in the sight of the people, and the people believed.*"—Exod. iv. 29-31. Here, if ever, we might have acknowledged an infallible guide; yet, within a few short weeks, at the request of the people, Aaron takes the lead in a gross act of idolatry.—Exod. xxxii. 1-6. The people were weary of waiting upon God according to his own word, and desired something more tangible and exciting, and induced him, who should have restrained them, to join in their sin. Just so with the Church of Rome.

The Scriptures were a sufficient guide (infallible in themselves, still to be interpreted by fallible men), but the people liked not the spirituality of the simple faith: they required something more externally attractive, and their guides, seeing this disposition—seeing, also, the wealth and power that would accrue to themselves from a more gorgeous ritual—did as Aaron had done, forget God, and reared up a golden idol in his place.

Again, we are told (Deut. ix. 20), that "the Lord was very angry with Aaron to have destroyed him." He who was preternaturally called to a special mission, and promised Divine guidance in word and deed, was well nigh destroyed at its very commencement (and only saved by the prayer of another), because he was not faithful in that committed to him. Indeed, God himself declares that his promises are conditional.—"*At what instant I shall speak concerning a kingdom to build and to plant it, if it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good wherewith I said I would benefit them.*"—Jer. xviii. 9, 10.

Let Mr. Rourke refer to the apocalyptic Churches, founded by the Apostles and apostolic men, and at the period when the Spirit addressed them under the presidency of the Apostle John, and he will see that the general promises of Christ do not secure infallibility to any Church, and that corporate bodies, even when under the rule of inspired heads, are not infallible. The Church of Ephesus had fallen, and was warned to repent or to be cut off. The Church at Ephesus was planted by St. Paul, who resided there "three years," earnestly preaching the truth.—Acts xx. 31. He appointed his own successor to watch over it, with whom he was in frequent communication; and shortly before his death he wrote his celebrated Epistle to them, in which he declares that they are "fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone." Here, then, was a Church which must have participation in all Christ's promises, yet even during the life of the beloved disciple who dwelt with her she had fallen; therefore the promises of Christ, together with the inspection of its rulers, do not assure infallibility to any Church. Still Christ's promises shall never fail—he is ever with his Church militant on earth, and will so continue till, triumphant in heaven, it beholds His glory.

Another argument against the pretension to infallibility is supplied by St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans. Speaking of the Jews, he says—"Well, because of unbelief they were broken off, and thou standest by faith; be not high-minded, but fear; for if God spared not the

natural branches, take heed lest he spare not thee; behold, therefore, the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, *if thou continue in his goodness, otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.*" This language, addressed by an inspired Apostle to the very Church of Rome, ought to have warned her against all assumption of high-sounding titles, and especially against that pretension to infallibility which belongs not to anything of earth, for if infallible, it must "*continue in the goodness of God,*" and then there could be no alternative of "*cutting off.*" Mr. Rourke asserts that all God's works are perfect—not absolutely so; they have all the elements of perfection, but being committed to imperfect agents they fall short of the mark. God had built up the Jewish nation and the Jewish Church; but both the civil and ecclesiastical state fell so far short of perfection that God frequently expresses His displeasure against them, and thus speaks to Jeremiah—"Behold, that which I have built I will break down, and that which I have planted I will pluck up, even this whole land." The general assertion, therefore, that all God's works are perfect after they come into the hands of man, is erroneous; but, if it were true, what can the Church of Rome plead more than Israel and Judah that infallibility should be hers?

Your obedient servant,

BEDALE.

ON PRAYERS FOR THE DEAD AND THE BURIAL SERVICE.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE CATHOLIC LAYMAN.

SIR—Since you have so peremptorily decided (C. L., Vol. ii., No. 21., page 106), that the question of purgatory is settled, as far as the Fathers of the first three centuries are concerned, it may appear preposterous in me again to recur to a subject thus summarily disposed of, and particularly so, as the references supplied by *Diego* are intended as the seal of your adjudication; but as these references are rather indefinite in application, and convey no specific information, I shall, in the first place, and I presume not "unreasonably," request to be informed, does St. Augustine mean by saying, "the Church hath rejected Origen," that the Church hath rejected all the writings of Origen? Secondly, I find Origen in different parts of his writings maintaining the following points of Catholic doctrine—namely, the *real presence* in the Eucharist, confession to a priest, invocation of angels and saints, the primacy of St. Peter, celibacy of the clergy, a release out of prison when the utmost farthing is paid, the Church alone the interpreter of Holy Scripture, authority of the Church—with other points of doctrine believed and taught by the Catholic Church of the present day: In this respect, then, I also require a decided reply as to whether any of the above-mentioned points, and, if so, which of them were condemned by the fifth (Ecumenical) Council? As I am not here treating controversially on these subjects, having only alluded to them for sake of illustration, I have not considered it necessary to refer to them particularly; this I can do should I come to discuss them. In noticing your remarks on the next portion of my letter I have not to contend with anything in the shape of an argument: you cautiously avoid the question at issue. To the argument which I proposed relative to the Fathers of the fourth century, and to which I now again call your attention, you only reply by frivolous objections, unfounded assumptions, or by endeavouring to represent me arguing "*unconsciously,*" from the present in support of the primitive doctrine of the Church. I have selected an argument at once rigorous and conclusive, and strictly limited to one particular period; and the force of your objections to the principles on which I have established this argument vanishes on a candid examination of the passages which I cited from these Fathers, all of whom refer, either directly or by implication, to 1 Cor. iii. 12, 13, 14, &c., and to other corroborating texts of Scripture, and in them they can find the doctrine of a future purgation and cleansing by fire; a punishing, yet saving fire, plainly and unmistakably established. Now, let me suppose a proposition illogically stated; a principle injudiciously adopted, or even arbitrarily assumed; can such informality justify you in withholding your arguments against the doctrine of purgatory? Is it because I argue the question on principles different from yours that you put your candle under a bushel, instead of dispelling what you call the superstitious darkness of your Catholic brethren? I am a Christian by profession and a Catholic by conviction; convince me that I am wrong and I will subscribe to your doctrine, and write my name Protestant.

Mr. Thorndike says of the faithful departed, "What hinders them to receive comfort, refreshment, rest, peace, and light to sustain them in the expectation of their trial, and the anxieties they are to pass through during the time of it? And though there be hopes for those that are solicitous to live and die good Christians that they are in no such suspense, but within the bounds of the heavenly Jerusalem; yet because their condition is uncertain, and while there is hope of the better, there is also fear of the worse; therefore, the Church hath always assisted them with the prayers of the living, both for their speedy trial and easy absolution, and discharge with glory before God."—(*Just Weights and Measures*, chap. xvi. p. 107.)

In this extract we have vividly set forth the belief of the Church respecting the trial of Christian souls after death, the anxieties they suffer during their trial, the practice of

the Church in assisting them, &c., and their *absolution and discharge*—or, if you will, a pardon of their sins; and that in a third place, or before they were admitted within the heavenly Jerusalem; whilst, on the contrary, the burial office in the Protestant ritual excludes the idea of any such belief. It is imperative that this office be read over all (save those excepted by the rubric), and a confident hope is expressed of the salvation of all that are buried, though they may have died in a notorious state of impenitence, without any appearance or profession of reconciliation to God; they may, in fact, have lived most notoriously infamous lives—have been Deists or Atheists, and continued so to their last moments; and not having been formally excommunicated, it is presumed of each such person in the burial office (which cannot be refused him) being read over his remains, that he is within the bounds of the heavenly Jerusalem; "that when we depart this life we may rest in him, as our hope is, *this our brother doth,*" is the burden of the prayer. Hence, it is evident that the Protestant doctrine of prayers for the dead is utterly different from that of the early Church, which prayed only for those who died in the sincere profession of the Catholic faith; as also from the doctrine of the Catholic Church of the present day, which refuses to pray for incorrigible, impenitent sinners. It is useless, in an affair of such importance, and when the evidence is so decidedly against you, to endeavour, by any evasive gloss, to ignore the fact, that in this *dogma* of Protestant doctrine there must be something radically wrong; and how this can be tolerated in a Church which claims to itself the exclusive privilege of being truly Evangelical, you will be called upon to explain. I ask you, was the Church founded by the Apostles so utterly defective in any of its constituent principles? I answer emphatically—No. You may reply, that the connection of your Church with the State has authorized the practice; but can that be any justification of the fact? Can it be consistent with rational charity that, on such an awful occasion, this office, in the name of religion, should be read most solemnly over the remains of a notorious impugner of religion; a debauched and abandoned libertine, or a professed unbeliever, and a hope expressed that he is with God; and that we are to be his future companions in glory? No prayer is offered to entreat comfort, refreshment, &c., to sustain him during his trial to obtain his absolution and discharge from his sins; but the presumptuous hope is expressed that he is with God.

That it may appear how just the foregoing observations are, I shall quote the opinions of some learned Divines of the Protestant Church on this same subject:—

"It must be owned, and it is too plain to be denied, that in such cases as you mention, of men cut off in the midst of notorious sins, drunkenness, adultery, murder, &c., this office is wholly improper; and sure, we need not doubt but that at length some regard will be had to the repeated desires of many of the best defenders of the Church, and this ground of objection against it be wholly removed." (Reas. of Conformity, page 62—By the Bishop of Winchester.)

Here is the evil admitted; also the inability of the Church to supply a remedy. Archbishop Tillotson says, "Was the ancient discipline of the Church in any degree put in practice now, in what shoals and herds would men be driven out of the communion of the Church" (Vol. I., Sermon 67). To the same purpose we have Dr. Wheatley (arguing the cases of *ipso facto* excommunications, p. 494), declaring "the consequence would be, we presume, that this office (the Burial Office) would comparatively be but seldom read."

This brings me to consider next your alleged charge against Catholics with respect to their ignorance of the first principles of Protestants; a charge which I think the foregoing observations have rendered wholly groundless.

Requesting you will show how the question of prayers for the dead, as I have stated, to be the practice of the Protestant Church, can be supported by Scripture authority, I have the honour to remain,

Sir, yours in sincere Christian charity,

EDMOND POWER.

As Mr. Power finds it so hard to understand what is meant by the assertion that "the Church hath rejected Origen," we must endeavour to throw a little light on the subject by a parallel case. He will admit, we suppose, that the Church of Rome has rejected Martin Luther. Does this mean that the Church of Rome rejects every doctrine that Martin Luther believed, and that she does not teach the doctrines of the Incarnation or the Trinity, because those truths were acknowledged by Luther? Surely not. Or again, does it mean that the Church of Rome only rejects those of Luther's opinions which she specially names, and that on every other point we may be quite sure that Luther and she perfectly agree? Not that either. But the Church of Rome having rejected Martin Luther, is no longer concerned what truths he may hold, or what falsehoods he may propound; he cannot be understood as having a right to represent her sentiments. Suppose now that a Protestant were to assert that the Church of Rome held that the moon was made of green cheese, and that the angels smoke tobacco, and should give as a proof his assertion that those propositions were to be found somewhere in the works of Martin Luther, what would Mr. Power reply? He would say, unless you give me references I cannot be expected to believe on your bare word that Luther did believe these strange propositions; but even if he did, it is nothing

* We are sorry to find the C. L. has not reached Mr. Hurley regularly. We are assured by our publisher that it has been regularly forwarded, as published, monthly.